



city & hackney
safeguarding
children board

Allegations against adults who work with children

Annual report 2014/15

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This annual report sets out the work of the Hackney Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the management of allegations against those who work with children during 2014/15.
- 1.2 The management of what to do if there are concerns about an adult who works with children is outlined in the statutory guidance '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*' (2015) and the London Child Protection Procedures – 5th edition, Chapter 17. Responding to allegations within schools' settings is addressed under the statutory guidance '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*' (2015). Both of these documents were revised in March 2015.
- 1.3 Guidance and procedures apply when there are concerns or it is alleged that an adult who works with children, either as an employee or in a voluntary capacity, has:
 - **Behaved in a way that may have harmed a child;**
 - **Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child;**
 - **Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.**
- 1.4 Such behaviour should be considered within the context of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect. It includes concerns about inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children.
- 1.5 The procedures require each Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to identify:
 - A named senior officer who has overall responsibility for ensuring that allegations are responded to appropriately and that any difficult interagency issues are effectively resolved;
 - A LADO who will be involved in the management and have oversight of individual cases, provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organizations and liaise with police and other agencies;
 - Employers in each agency should designate a senior manager to whom allegations or concerns should initially be reported;
 - The police should designate a named police officer to liaise with the LADO, take part in strategy discussions and share information as appropriate.

2. Governance arrangements for the Hackney LADO

- 2.1 A dedicated LADO post was introduced into Hackney in May 2013 as part of the support team attached to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB).
- 2.2 This unique governance arrangement was referenced in the 2013/14 annual report as having created improved consistency and independence; whilst helping establish strong relationships of transparency and trust across key professionals.
- 2.3 Lead officers involved in the management of allegations from March 2014 to January 2015 were:

- Rory McCallum, Senior Professional Advisor to the CHSCB and the named senior officer with overall responsibility for LADO activity.
 - Janet Lamb, Hackney LADO.
- 2.4 In January 2015, the governance of the LADO post moved under the management of the Safeguarding and Learning Service within Hackney Children and Young Peoples Service.
- 2.5 Lead officers involved in the management of allegations from January 2015 to the end of March 2015 were:
- Lisa Aldridge, Service Manager, Safeguarding & Learning Service, Hackney Children & Young People's Services
 - Jeffrey Baker, Hackney LADO
- 2.6 The operational decision to change the governance arrangements for the LADO coincided with the launch of a Government consultation on *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013*. This consultation included proposed changes to the guidance involving the management of allegations against those who work with children.
- 2.7 The consultation ran from 6 January 2015 to 3 February 2015 and received 308 responses. The Government proposed to amend statutory guidance to state that referrals relating to both concerns about a child and allegations against those who work with children should be dealt with via a single point of contact.
- 2.8 The rationale behind the change was to simplify referral routes, thereby reducing the risk that allegations are managed in isolation from any action necessary to address child welfare concerns. There had also been a suggestion that the LADO role causes confusion amongst some professionals about what to refer and to whom.
- 2.9 Three questions were asked and the full Government response to the consultation can be found [here](#).
- 2.10 In response to the first question about whether allegations against people who work with children should be routed through children's social care, so that they are dealt with alongside child welfare concerns in a coordinated manner, the Government stated the following:
- "In response to the concerns raised, we have decided to change the text that we consulted on. We have therefore removed the proposed expectation that allegations against those who work with children should be routed through children's social care, and instead stated that allegations and referrals relating to concerns about a child should be dealt with in a coordinated manner. We believe that this strikes the right balance between emphasising the importance of a coordinated approach – which consultees felt was important – and allowing room for local discretion."*
- 2.11 Locally, this co-ordination continues with a named LADO covering the London Borough of Hackney. Referrals are not "routed" through the front-door / assessment functions of Children's Social Care and a dedicated role continues to provide advice and co-ordination around any relevant matters.

2.12 A revised operating protocol was implemented by the Safeguarding and Learning Service to ensure absolute clarity about the new arrangements and can be found [here](#). The arrangements were further communicated to the workforce via the CHSCB briefing “[Things You Should Know](#)” in March 2015.

2.13 In response to the second question on whether the officer or officers managing allegations against those who work with children should be qualified social workers, the Government stated the following:

“Respondents to the consultation were clearly against the proposal that all those managing allegations against those who work with children should be qualified social workers. The crux of the concerns raised by respondents centred on the possible loss of experienced members of staff who are currently fulfilling this role to a high standard, resulting in a poorer service.

While the department’s view, and the view of the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, remains that social workers should manage allegations against those who work with children, we have listened to the concerns raised through the consultation. In response to the consultation feedback, we have added a new expectation that those managing allegations should be sufficiently qualified and experienced. This will mean that high quality, experienced designated officers, who are not necessarily social work qualified, can continue to fulfil this role.

We have, however, said that new appointments to such roles should be qualified social workers, unless they have previous experience as such. We believe that this will bring some strong benefits, as highlighted by some consultation respondents, and particularly within the context of the new accredited roles being introduced to children’s social care.”

2.14 Locally, the LADO in Hackney continues to be an experienced qualified social worker. Where the LADO is not available, advice is also available from other qualified social workers who are employed as Child Protection Conference Chairs / Independent Reviewing officers in the Safeguarding and Learning Service.

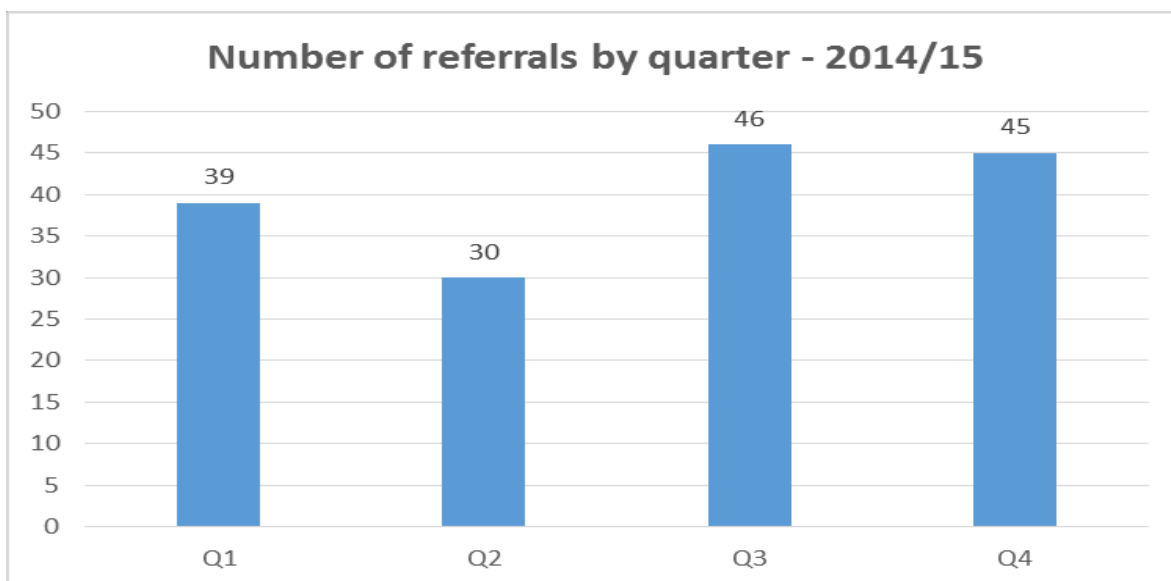
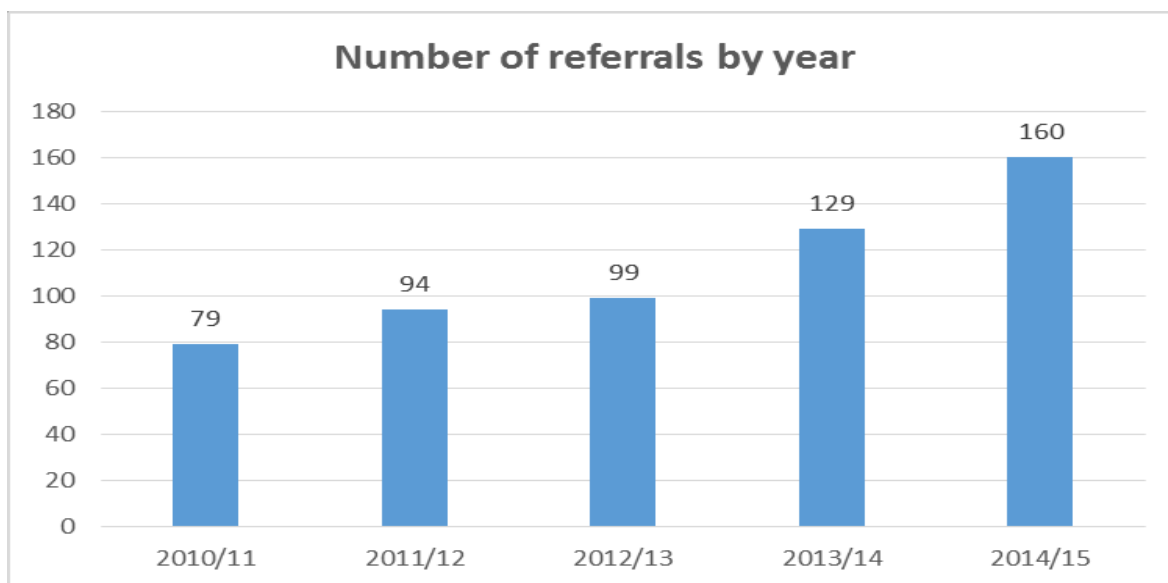
2.15 The third question was whether there are any aspects of the revised text in this area that could be made clearer. The Government responded as follows:

“A majority of respondents felt that the revised text in this area could be made clearer and some provided suggestions on how the text could be improved. This included comments made in respect of the points on which changes have been made...”

3. Key information, trends and analysis of LADO activity 2014/15

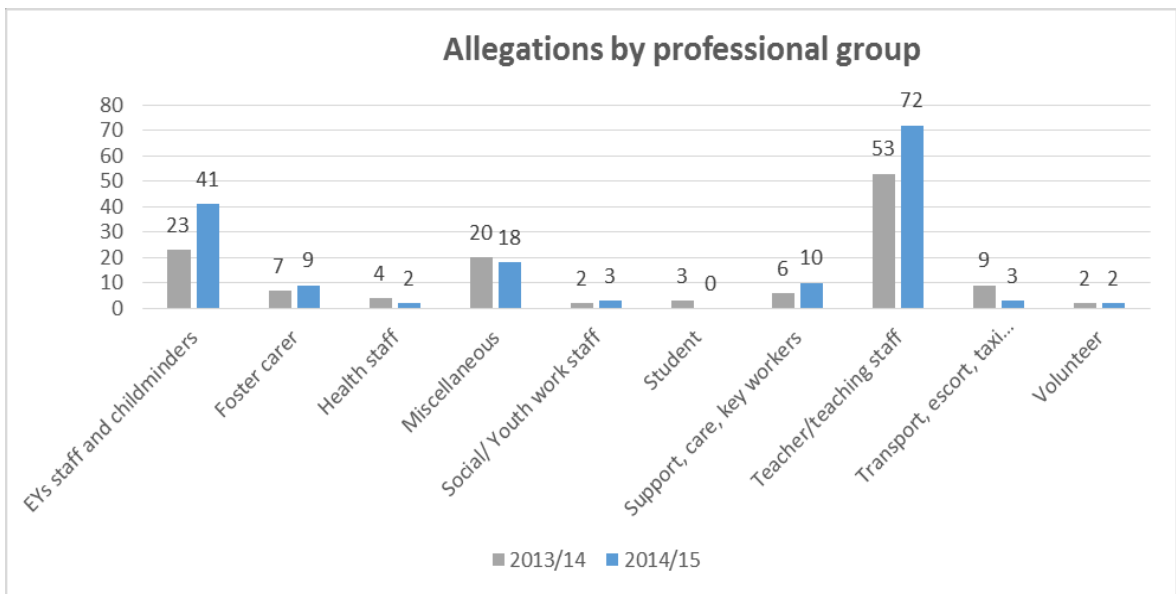
3.1 The key information, trends and analysis of the Hackney LADO activity during 2014/15 are set out below:

- 160 referrals were made to the LADO in 2014/15.
- This is a 24% increase from 2013/14, a 62% increase from 2012/13 (129 referrals) and a 103% increase from 2010/11 (99 referrals).



3.2 This upward trend in referrals to the Hackney LADO over the last 5 years remains encouraging and continues to reflect a system constantly evolving and improving in its ability to identify and refer issues of concern involving those who work with children.

- 3.3 Whilst difficult to precisely identify reasons for the overall increase, it is still considered that this is likely to relate to a better understanding as to what is required in respect of reporting, rather than the increase reflecting more instances of abuse and inappropriate behaviour.
- 3.4 Supporting this improved understanding, over 2014/15 the LADO delivered numerous bespoke briefing sessions with key groups of professionals (particularly across the schools and early years sectors) and the CHSCB has continued to deliver multi-agency training courses that include a focus on this subject.
- 3.5 Group A training includes reference to the LADO role as part of basic safeguarding training; setting out what professionals need to do if they are worried about a child in these circumstances. More specialist training at Group C covers aspects of safer recruitment and the responsibilities of designated leads.
- 3.6 In 2014/15, the uptake of CHSCB training increased by 51%. Whilst some of this increase has been assessed as being a result of recording improvements, it has also been assessed as evidencing increased take-up.
- 3.7 It is also likely that improved awareness by children and their parents / carers has influenced the increased rate of reporting.

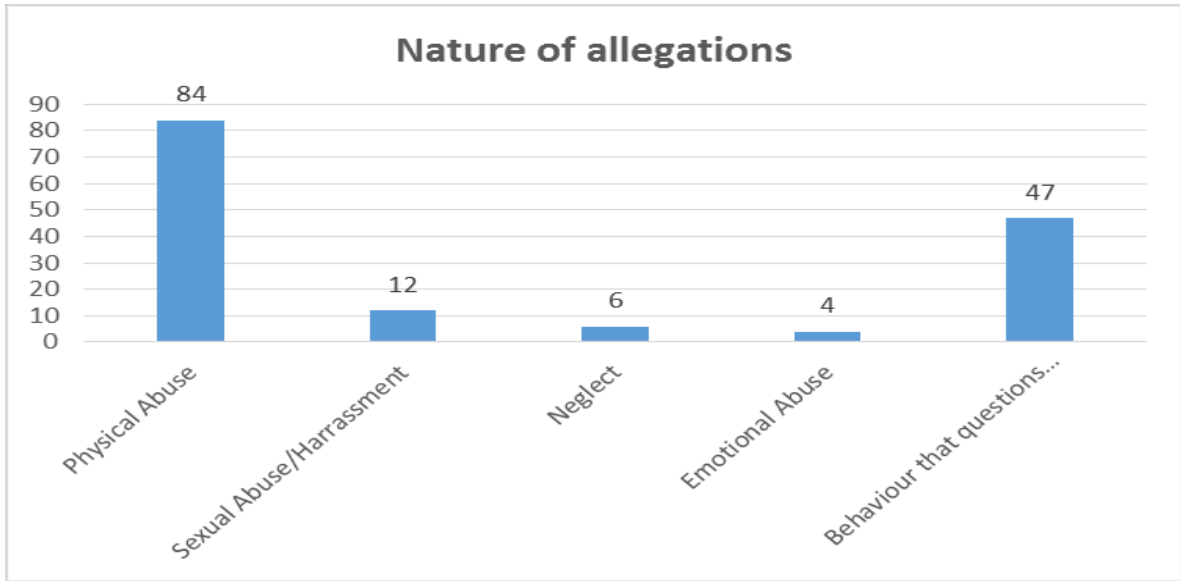


- 3.8 During 2014/15, 72 allegations were made against teachers and teaching staff. This group continues to reflect the highest number of referrals to the LADO. Comparing this professional group with previous years, there has been a 35% increase in allegations since 2013/14 (53 referrals) and a 71% increase since in 2012/13 (42 referrals). This reflects a sustained and improving level of awareness across the school community regarding their responsibilities in this area.
- 3.9 The number of allegations made against early years' workers has also continued to increase year on year. 41 referrals were made in reference to early years staff and childminders in 2014/15. This is an increase of 78% compared with 2013-14 (23 referrals) and 355% compared with 2012-13 (9 referrals). Similarly, this increase reflects a

sustained and improving level of awareness by this sector and the ongoing close working relationship between the Hackney Early Years and Families Service and the LADO.

- 3.10 The overall proportion of allegations made against teachers and teaching staff remains at around 40% of the total number of referrals. The overall proportion of allegations made against Early Years staff and childminders has risen from 17% (2013-14) to 25% (2014-15) of the total number. It is not unusual for the majority of referrals to arise against those who work in roles that bring them into significant contact with children and young people and this is evidenced in the local Hackney figures.
- 3.11 There was a slight increase in allegations made against foster carers in 2014/15 (9 referrals) compared with 2013/14 (7 referrals). These figures are still below figures in 2012/13 (17 referrals).
- 3.12 3 referrals were made against those in transport, escort or taxi services in 2014/15. This is a decrease from 9 referrals in 2013/14. This particular area has been identified as requiring further scrutiny by the CHSCB as part of the strategy to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation and Section 11 compliance work in 2015. Assurance work is currently underway to ensure the range of in-house or commissioned transport services utilised by any agency are compliant with Section 11 standards of safeguarding and specifications are robust and reference safeguarding responsibilities.
- 3.13 The remaining 47 referrals made up 29% of the overall number of allegations. No particular patterns or trends were identified across this cohort with referrals being spread across a range of different professional groups.
- 3.14 Of note, there were 2 referrals for health staff in 2014-15 and 4 in 2013-14. This low level of reporting was identified during 2014/15 and following challenge at the Quality Assurance Sub Group, the CHSCB sought reassurance from the City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in relation to health awareness, referral numbers and the level of engagement of healthcare providers in the LADO process.
- 3.15 The Designated Nurse led on a piece of work that benchmarked the number of health referrals and these were found to be similar to comparator and pan-London levels. In addition to this, further reassurance work was undertaken and established that all health care providers across the City of London and Hackney have relevant policies in place in relation to managing allegations against professionals and are compliant against this Section 11 requirement.
- 3.16 As part of reinforcing the responsibilities in this area, feedback was provided to the CCG Safeguarding Assurance Group and feedback was given to all provider safeguarding committees in order to highlight responsibilities.
- 3.17 Continuing low numbers were also recognised in terms of referrals from both the Police and Probation. This is perhaps not unusual due to the nature and level of direct engagement with children and young people, and the low numbers are similarly reflected across other London areas. As examples, the numbers of referrals from the Police and probation in the following areas have been noted in 2013/14:
 - Camden 4 Police / 0 Probation
 - Enfield 0 Police / 0 Probation
 - Haringey 0 Police / 0 Probation

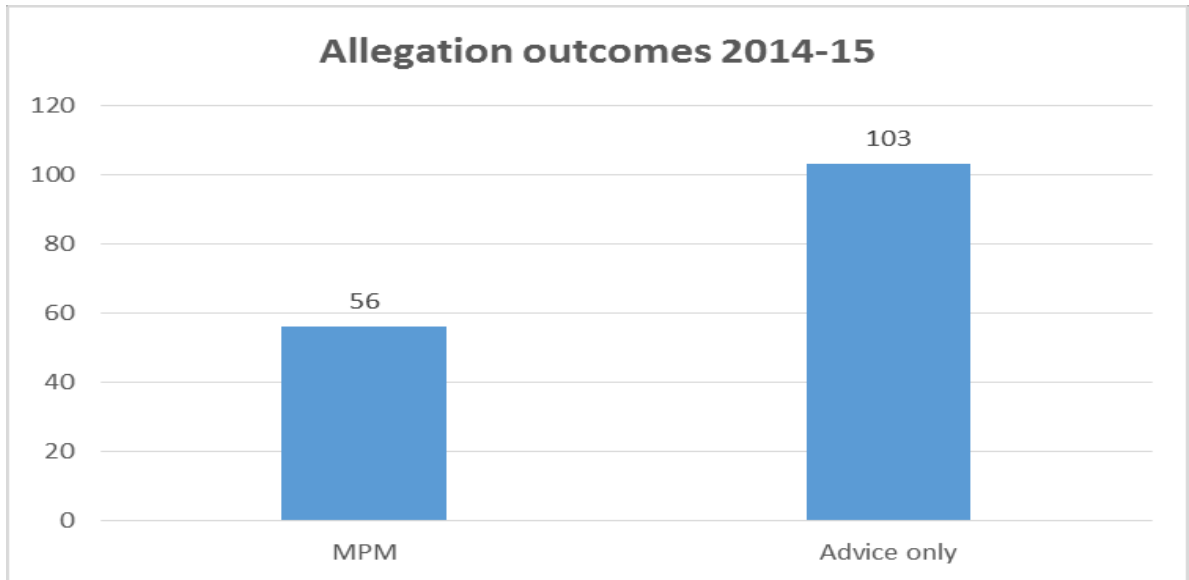
3.18 With regards to the nature of the allegations:



- The majority of the reported concerns relating to allegations against professionals working with children involved **physical abuse** of children and young people, with referral numbers remaining steady. The number of referrals for physical abuse in 2014-15 (84) has remained consistent compared with 86 referrals in 2013/14. Tracking back to 2012/13, the overall number of referrals for physical abuse has increased 43% (from 58 referrals).
- 12 referrals related to possible **sexual abuse/ sexual harassment**. This is a decrease from 2013-14 where 21 referrals were made.
- 6 referrals related to **neglect**. There were no cases in 2013-14 with neglect assigned as the primary category.
- 4 referrals were in relation to **emotional abuse**. One referral was made in relation to both physical and emotional abuse.
- 47 referrals related to **behaviour that may question the individual's suitability to work** with children. This is an increase of 130% compared with the number of referrals in 2013-14 (20). Reasons for this increase are considered to reflect improved professional curiosity by staff in organisations that is more robustly questioning of adult behaviours.

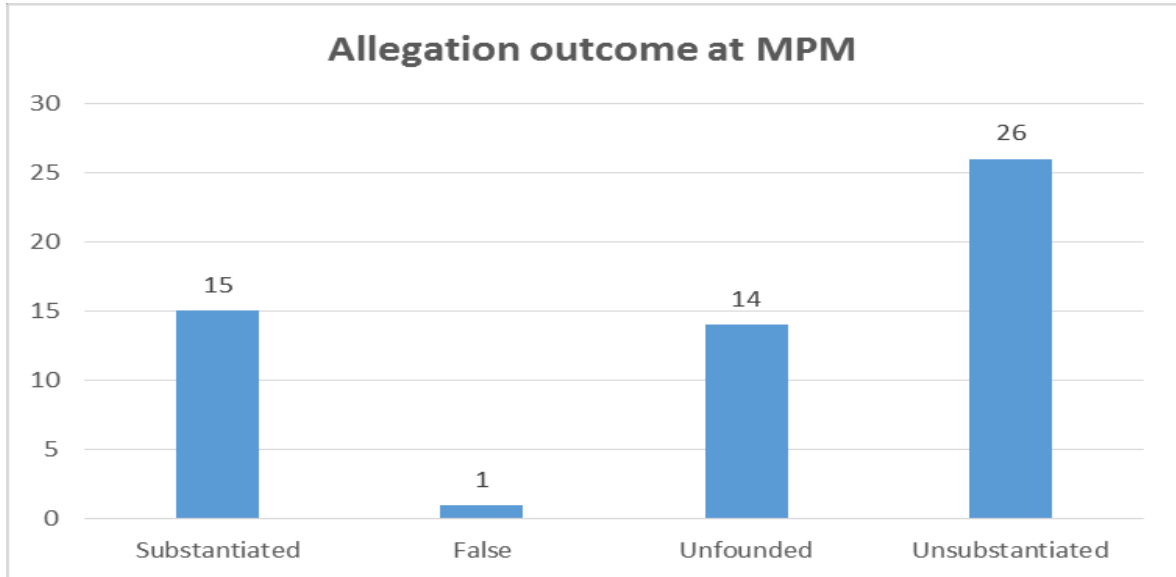
3.19 With regards to the outcomes of allegations, advice was offered on 103 cases ranging from referral onto another process, i.e. standards of care, or internal investigation due to conduct issues; and in some cases referrals were made directly to Ofsted due to the nature of the concerns raised.

3.20 56 referrals (35%) made to the LADO resulted in at least one Management Planning Meeting (MPM) being held. The proportion of referrals progressing to an MPM is similar to figures in 2013-14 (36%).



3.21 A MPM constitutes the strategy meeting in respect of the allegation. The MPM will decide, on completion of all relevant investigations, whether the allegation is:

- Substantiated: there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation;
- False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
- Malicious: there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false;
- Unfounded: there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all of the circumstances
- Unsubstantiated: this is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation; the term therefore does not imply guilt or innocence.



3.22 Outcomes for MPMs in Hackney during 2014/15 are set out in the graph above. The majority resulted in no formal action (26 unsubstantiated, 14 unfounded and 1 false). In 15 of the 56 cases subject to a MPM, the allegations were substantiated, with a range of disciplinary actions being taken by the employer.

4 Progress against priorities for 2014/15

4.1 The 2013/14 annual report of the LADO identified 3 areas to progress:

- Continue to work with Hackney Children’s Social Care in developing robust processes within the IT system for recording and reporting of LADO activity.
- Further develop the multi-agency group to focus upon ongoing improvements to the LADO and safer recruitment processes across the borough.
- Improve the Quality Assurance process for LADO activity by engaging in the planned peer review activity being developed through the London LADO network and providing on-going performance reports to the QA Sub-Committee of the CHSCB.

4.2 The IT system has been successfully developed and is now utilised by the Hackney LADO for recording all relevant activity.

4.3 Having met to consider progressing a multi-agency group focussing on improvements to the LADO and safer recruitment processes, it was agreed by partner agencies that systems were sufficiently embedded not to require ongoing meetings. LADO activity was scrutinised through the Quality Assurance Sub Group during 2014/15 and for next year, this reporting will be through to the Hackney CHSCB Executive on a bi-annual basis. CHSCB LADO & safer recruitment training is ongoing, discreet activity and awareness raising by the LADO is ongoing and agencies are scrutinised for their performance through the Section 11 work undertaken by the Board.

4.4 In September 2014, the Hackney LADO participated in a peer review process engaging other London LADOs. Hackney received a peer review from the Tower Hamlet's LADO. The purpose of this review was to provide a snapshot assessment of LADO functions and to identify and relevant areas for improvement.

4.5 The conclusion of that peer review is set out below:

“The LADO function is soundly embodied into Hackney’s structure and is presently a fulltime post. Having a dedicated LADO is clearly providing consistency of response and giving referrers an identifiable contact. Partner agencies are aware of the named LADO which aids the giving of advice and receiving of allegations/referrals. Areas that need to be developed are being identified and addressed. As the role expands there is likely to be need to consider expanding the support offered to the LADO to allow the LADO to undertake their task.”

5 Priorities 2015/16

The following priority areas have been agreed by the Safeguarding and Learning Service and will be reported to the CHSCB as part of the agreed bi-annual reporting to the Hackney CHSCB Executive:

- Continue awareness raising of LADO activity through multi-agency training, CHSCB communications and direct awareness raising by the named LADO.
- Specifically monitor number of referrals across transport, escort and taxi services in 2015-16 – consistent with the CHSCB CSE strategy and action plan.
- Develop and evaluate a feedback process to ensure that the views and experiences of other agencies on the LADO are included in service development.